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THE SPIRIT AND VALUE OF PRUSSIAN RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

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Every Prussian child must receive instruction in religion. The subject is prescribed by the regulations of the ministry of instruction, to which all schools, public and private, are obliged to conform. On the other hand, the regulations do not intend to compel any child to receive a religious instruction contrary to the religious faith of his parents. The matter is administered thus: The state schools, and in general the private schools, provide separate instruction for Protestants and for Catholics, and in some cases for Jews; the parent may send his child to whichever of these forms he adheres to. Or, if he dissents from all the forms provided, he may withdraw his child from religious instruction in the school, on the one condition that he shall provide for the child a religious instruction which in quantity and thoroughness satisfies the public educational authorities.

In actual fact the vast majority of the people profess one of the above-mentioned faiths, and allow their children to receive the corresponding instruction. In 1901 there were in Prussian schools 5,670,870 pupils, of whom 3,520,743 were Evangelical, 2,118,815 Catholic, 24,022 Jews, and only 7,290 of "other Christian confessions." It is evident that dissent, in the sense of open withdrawal from the regular confessions, is in Germany a negligible quantity.

The chief point to emphasize here is that the religious instruction in the schools is in all cases "confessional," or, as we should say, sectarian or denominational; it is in all cases distinctly and avowedly Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish.

There are two plans of arranging for the separate religious instruction of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. The first and commonest is the confessional school, in which all persons and all teaching are supposed to be distinctively Protestant or Catholic, or in a few cases Jewish. Since there is seldom a sufficient population of Jews

to permit of a Jewish school, the Jewish children ordinarily go to Protestant or Catholic schools, and have their religious lessons outside of school, from the rabbi of the congregation to which they belong. The second plan is the so-called *Simultanschule*, in which teachers and pupils of different confessions are found; the children are mixed without discrimination of creed in all subjects except religion; for this they are sorted out and instructed separately. Thus even in the *Simultanschule* the religious instruction is just as definitely confessional as in the confessional school.

The debate over the respective merits of the two plans is very animated. The matter need not detain us, since the religious instruction itself is the same whether given in a confessional or a *Simultanschule*; and, moreover, the number of the *Simultanschulen* is small, especially in Prussia. In 1901 there were in Prussia 24,910 (67.77 per cent.) Evangelical schools, 10,799 (29.38 per cent.) Catholic, 244 (0.66 per cent.) Jewish, and 803 (2.18 per cent.) *Simultanschulen*.

Religion is the first-named subject in the school programme; it is studied throughout the course in both higher and lower schools; the amount of time devoted to it varies somewhat, but is always large. We give below the programme laid down by the general regulations for the *Volksschule* with more than one teacher—that is, for the usual town or city school. The numbers indicate hours of instruction per week.

	Lower Grades	Middle Grades	Upper Grades
Religion.....	4	4	4
Mother-tongue.....	11	8	8
Arithmetic.....	4	4	4
Geometry.....	2
Drawing.....	2
Natural science.....	..	6	6
Singing.....	1	2	2
Gymnastics.....	2	2	2
Total.....	22	26	30

It is seen that only one subject exceeds religion in its allotment of time; that is, the mother-tongue, including reading, composition, literature, and other forms of language instruction. Arithmetic has exactly the same amount of time as religion. The three "R's"

in this school are evidently reading, 'rithmetic, and religion. Taking the eight years of the *Volksschule*, we find that religion gets a little over 15 per cent. of the whole time. Counting forty weeks to the school year, we have 1,280 hours of religious instruction in the common-school course.

For the small, one-teacher schools the regulations prescribe a little more religion: four hours a week for the lower grades, and five hours for the middle and upper grades, thus putting religion in advance of arithmetic, and giving it 17 per cent. of the whole school time.

A small amount of variation from these hours is sometimes permitted with the special sanction of the ministry. Berlin, for example, has only three hours per week in the lower grades instead of four.

In the higher schools less time is given to religion, but the subject is still prominent. The prescription is the same for all the types of "higher schools"—*Gymnasium*, *Realgymnasium*, and *Oberrealschule*. The time assigned to religion is three hours per week in the lowest class (*Sexta*) and two hours in the remaining classes. To this must be added the three years of preparatory work in the *Volksschule* or in a *Vorschule*. The time for the *Volksschule* has been given, four hours per week. I have found no prescription for the *Vorschule*, but representative programmes give to religion three hours a week for the first two years and two hours for the third year. This gives for the whole twelve years of the higher school education a total of a little over 1,000 hours' instruction in religion, or about 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. of the whole time.

It may be noted, in passing, that the time allotted to religion has been cut down little by little for many years. Before the Falk regulations of 1872 the subject had six hours a week in the *Volksschule*.¹

Religion is regularly omitted from the curriculum of the continuation schools of Prussia. In the kingdom of Saxony it may be included, provided no lessening of time for other subjects is caused thereby. In Bavaria, on the other hand, religion is the first subject in the continuation school, historically and in present fact. It seems passing strange to count fourteen-year-old children ripe for

¹ See *Report of the United States Commissioner of Education*, 1893-94, pp. 295, 296.

independence in religion, while still recognizing their need for further instruction in reading and arithmetic.

During the last part of the common-school period, usually in the last school year, the children receive special religious instruction from the pastor as a preparation for confirmation. This is in addition to the regular school instruction in religion, which continues as usual.² The confirmation instruction usually takes two hours a week throughout the last school year or the greater part of the year. Its matter is much the same as that of the school lessons in religion; its methods naturally differ somewhat, being as a rule more emotional and hortatory.

In what esteem is the instruction in religion held among the school studies? What place does religion hold in the minds of the teachers and managers of the schools? Schoolmen, almost without exception, are emphatic in asserting the unique power and incomparable value of religious instruction. Falk himself, the greatest minister of education of recent times, wrote in 1873: "It is just the religious instruction which makes the most essential contribution to the solution of the task of the *Volksschule*; and upon this school rests the duty of guarding and cherishing the highest interests of the life of the German people."³ Professor Rein, the noted pedagogical leader, expresses himself repeatedly to the same effect; for example: "It is an empty illusion to suppose that anyone, whether of the common people or of higher rank, can be educated without the aid of religious motives."⁴

An eminent evangelical clergyman, prominent also as a writer on education says: "Scarcely anyone who knows human nature will doubt that education without religious instruction is impossible. Only the lowest materialism, which degrades man to the rank of beasts, could deny that."⁵ The expressions often rise to a poetical enthusiasm, as in the following, quoted approvingly by Rein: "He

² In some states the school instruction is omitted or abridged during the period of the confirmation instruction. There is a desire on the part of some Prussian teachers for a similar arrangement.

³ Schneider, *Volksschulwesen und Lehrerbildung in Preussen* (Berlin, 1875), pp. 45, 46.

⁴ *Beiträge zur Weiterentwicklung der Religion* (Munich, 1905), p. 302.

⁵ Katzer, *Das Judenchristentum* (Leipzig, 1893), p. 7.

takes the sun from the heavens and robs the year of spring who would banish the religious instruction from the school or reduce it to a subordinate place."⁶ Or again, this time from an emeritus seminary director: "To remove the religious instruction entirely out of the school and hand it over to the church would be to destroy the crown of all our school work, to rob it of its consecration and blessing."⁷

Further, the religious instruction is to be made the center and foundation of the whole school; Rein takes this position, and Dörfeld quotes it approvingly,⁸ and the idea is found explicitly or implicitly in much of the literature.

Moral instruction is declared to be quite inadequate: it lacks the very best educative forces—concreteness, rich color, freshness of interest.⁹ It is significant that Dörfeld, perhaps the best-known pedagogical writer on the *Volksschule*, out of his three volumes on special method devotes one whole volume to religion. Interesting also are the declarations of the various German states as to the aim of the school; with one exception they emphasize religion, morals, and patriotism, in most cases putting religion first.¹⁰

Over against all this magnifying and admiration must be set several facts. First, the very men who so highly praise religious instruction in the abstract in most cases condemn severely the existing instruction, in not a few cases charging the present widespread irreligion and estrangement from the church as a result of egregious faults of the religious teaching in the schools.

My own observation produced the impression that the majority of teachers were at best comparatively indifferent toward the religious instruction; very few used any such expressions of esteem as are quoted above; some said in private conversation that they would prefer to have no school instruction in religion rather than the present form. But even these men admitted freely that the right kind of

⁶ Rein, *Das erste Schuljahr*.

⁷ Leutz, in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Pädagogik*, Vol. XII, No. 1, p. 30.

⁸ Dörfeld, *Schriften* (Gütersloh, 1894), Vol. II, Part 2, p. 63.

⁹ Rein, in *Beiträge zur Weiterentwicklung der Religion*, p. 292.

¹⁰ Lexis, *Das Unterrichtswesen im Deutschen Reich* (Berlin, 1904), Vol. III, pp. 64, 65.

religious teaching would be a thing much to be desired. Few seemed satisfied with the present conditions, and these were all men in middle life or older.

There is no doubt that the deep conflict existing between various conceptions of the true nature and function of the religious instruction makes itself felt in the actual school work. In some schools the lesson in religion is regarded, and perhaps even realized, as the crown of the teacher's work; in other cases it is a dull and common task, or even an unwelcome intruder.

As to public opinion in general, it would not be far wrong to sum it up thus: that religious instruction is an indispensable element in any complete school course; but that the present form of religious instruction stands in need of radical and extensive reform.

The aim of the religious instruction is definitely formulated by the official regulations. For the *Volksschule* we read:

The aim of the Evangelical religious instruction is to enable the children to understand the Holy Scriptures and the creed of the church to which they belong, in order that they may be able to read the Scriptures for themselves and share actively in the life and work of the church.¹¹

The regulations for the higher schools prescribe the aim as follows:

The Evangelical religious instruction aims, with the aid of the total activity of the school and through education in God's Word, to train the pupils up to personal Christianity and well-formed principles, so that they may in due time show themselves competent through their faith and life, and especially through active participation in the life of the church, to exercise a beneficent influence, worthy of their social station, upon the life of the people as a whole.¹²

We cannot fail to be struck with the prominence of church and the Scriptures in these official statements of the aim of the religious instruction; not that these are out of place, or could be omitted, but that we should have looked for more emphasis upon life and character, upon spirituality and conduct—which are slightly touched in the latter of the two paragraphs and not even mentioned in the former.

It will be of interest to notice what some representative German

¹¹ Schneider, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹² *Lehrpläne und Lehraufgaben für die höheren Schulen in Preussen* (Halle, 1902), p. 8.

writers have to say about the aim of the instruction in religion. We quote first from Dr. Zange, a well-known writer upon this subject:

The function of the Evangelical religious instruction. . . . is to introduce the pupils to the creed of their church, to demonstrate the scriptural and historical justification of this creed, and to set forth both its agreement with and its opposition to the teaching of the Catholic church; and also to give the pupils an elementary knowledge of the diversities of creed within the limits of Protestant Christendom.¹³

Here the paramount interest is confessional and ecclesiastical. We quote next from Dr. Thrändorf, teacher in a normal school and author of numerous much-used works on religious instruction:

As our Lord and Master took his leave from his disciples, he gave them the commission: "Make disciples of all nations!" This commission applies today above all to the teachers of religion. "Make your pupils," says Jesus to them, "my disciples; that is, persons in whom my spirit lives and works continually." . . . Every other task of the religious instruction must be brought into the service of this one supreme end.¹⁴

Here the church is not mentioned, and the emphasis is laid upon inner religion and the religious life. Another type of interpretation is found in the next quotation, from the eminent Jena professor, Rein:

The only right aim is this, to provide the heart with pure emotions and a consecrated, determined, vigorous will. . . . We must implant our ideas of life and its values in our children. The highest of these ideas are embraced in the religious conception of the universe, along with the principles of the moral order.¹⁵

Here church and creed are not even hinted at, and even the religious element is subordinated to the moral.

These three quotations represent three elements which are present in varying proportions in practically all conceptions of the aim of religious instruction: the ecclesiastical or confessional, the religious, and the moral. It is evident from the quotations, which are fairly representative of various types of actual opinion, that there is great

¹³ Zange, *Evangelischer Religionsunterricht*, p. 45; quoted in *Mitteilungen des Vereins der Freunde Herbartischer Pädagogik in Thüringen* (Langensalza, 1904), No. 24, p. 9.

¹⁴ Thrändorf, *Der Religionsunterricht im Lehrerseminar* (Gotha, 1901), p. 5.

¹⁵ *Pädagogische Warte* (Osterwieck-Harz), January, 1904, pp. 670, 671.

difference of opinion as to the relative importance of *church*, *spirituality*, and *morals* in the aim of religious instruction.

There is another form of dissension as to aim which we must consider; that is, the question whether the religious instruction ought to work upon the intellect merely, or upon the emotions. A fair idea of the conflict of opinion may be gained from the following. In a meeting of teachers a paper was read in which the following statement was made:

The religious instruction in the higher schools belongs to the category of scientific studies. It is our duty, therefore, to treat predominantly the scientific, that is usually the historical, side of the subject. As in all scientific culture, we must place the understanding, not the emotional nature, in the foreground.¹⁶

This provoked warm discussion; several speakers vigorously attacked the position of the paper; the following, spoken by a bishop ("Generalsuperintendent") of the state church, may represent the opposition: "The aim of all branches of the religious instruction must remain ever the same—simple, heartfelt piety." It must be remembered that the bishop was by no means an outsider in the controversy, but stood officially for the state church, which has almost absolute control of all regulation and much of the inspection of the school instruction in religion.

The literature of the religious instruction is full of the view that the just ends of the work cannot possibly be attained by any appeal directed exclusively, or even mainly, to the understanding. I have met only two definite expressions to the contrary—the one quoted above, and an article by Gymnasium-Director Henke, of Bremen, in which the whole content of the religious instruction (in the higher schools at least) is reduced to preception (*Belehrung*) and knowledge.

The above citations may be taken as expressing the ideals held for the instruction in religion, by the governing authorities, and by eminent men more or less directly engaged in the work of the schools. But it must be understood that these are ideals, and find realization for the most part very imperfectly. It is easy for a regulation to say, as one clause does, that the lessons in the Bible are "to be made fruitful to the growth and culture of the mental and moral nature;" but very hard to find the man or woman who can obey this exhor-

¹⁶ *Zeitschrift für den evangelischen Religionsunterricht*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, p. 272.

tation. As a matter of fact, the impression made by most lessons in religion is much the same as that made by a lesson in arithmetic or history—that the chief aim is to “get the lesson,” to achieve complete mastery of the story, the hymn, the paragraph of the catechism, or whatever chances to be the task in hand. Out of many classes which the writer visited in Prussia in higher and lower schools, he met with only one teacher who manifested any other purpose than that of mastering the knowledge contained in the lesson for the day; even when moral or religious “application” was made of the history or incidents, the method and spirit were intellectual and involved knowledge and thought, not feeling. So that, whatever may be the aim in the minds of the minister of education and his colleagues, and of educational writers, there is no doubt that the aim of the actual teacher is in general much the same in religion as in geography or algebra.

There is good reason to believe that the teacher with the religious aim and motive, so rare an exception in Prussia, is more common, and perhaps much more common, among some of the warmer and more emotional peoples of other German states, especially Bavaria and the small Thuringian countries.

The subject-matter of the lessons in religion is fixed by official decree for the whole kingdom. Its largest part is study of the Bible, including Bible stories for the youngest pupils, gradually developing into Bible history as they advance; the learning of texts, which are constantly used in illustration and amplification of all parts of the lessons; the study of the non-historical portions of the Bible, especially the Psalms, many of which are committed to memory; and the weekly study of the church lessons, or “pericopes,” as they are called. In addition to this comes what is called Bible knowledge, which is usually, however, not much more than the learning of the names of the books in their order, and never in any case ventures upon anything of a critical nature. Next to the Bible comes the catechism, which is committed to memory, along with Luther’s commentary or explanation, and is diligently recited from almost the first year of school to the end of the common-school period. Some prayers and many hymns are learned. A little church history is learned in the older classes, chiefly relating to Luther and the

Reformation. Finally in the last year of the common school the pupils are introduced to the forms and significance of the church service and the ecclesiastical year. To these elements, common to all schools, the higher schools add a brief study of theology and Christian morals, based chiefly upon the Augsburg Confession.¹⁷

The advantages of such a discipline as the German religious instruction lie upon the surface; no one who looks with unbiased eyes can fail to perceive them. The mere knowledge of the history and literature of the Bible itself, and, though far less important, of the creeds and poetry of the church, is indispensable for any full and rounded culture intellectually. The personalities of the Scriptures—Moses, Abraham, David, Job, Paul, and the rest—are so omnipresent in our civilization and literature that no one unacquainted with them can claim to be intelligent. The same is true of biblical events, such as the plagues of Egypt, the flood, the ark, the incidents of the gospels, and the like. To attempt to comprehend the history of the world, and particularly of any Germanic race, without a knowledge of the facts contained in the Bible and some acquaintance with the history of the Christian church, is to try to solve a problem without the aid of the most vital factor.

No doubt our greatest aesthetic debt is to the Greeks; yet we must believe that the conceptions of religion as set forth in the Old Testament poetry and prophecy, and in the nobler hymns of the Christian church, contribute a peculiar and vital form of the beautiful. A strong confirmation of this is the stimulus which many of the greatest writers have found in the ideas and language of the Bible. What has been a source of inspiration and aesthetic illumination to them may well serve the same end to the youth through school instruction in such works as the Psalms, the Book of Job, and the purest and grandest hymns—of which the German tongue has such rich store.

But, of course, the chief service for which we look to the religious instruction is moral and spiritual uplift. Here the possibilities are unlimited. Who can deny that the Bible surpasses all other literature in the most essential requisites for moral and religious teaching: in concreteness, in richness of incident, in unswerving fidelity to

¹⁷ For a fuller account of the content of the religious instruction, see *Education* (Boston), November, 1906.

truth, in loftiness of conception of righteousness? Concerning the greatest figure in Bible and religious instruction we may say, in spite of scattered voices to the contrary, that the principles of Jesus are the motive and explanation of modern life and history, and that no one who has not in one way or another appropriated these ethical ideas can bear his part in the world today. This is perhaps the supreme justification for a religious instruction, at least if the state is to contribute to its support. The Germans are right when they declare that no other branch of study can contribute so largely and richly to the formation of a *Weltanschauung*, a conception of the universe and of life, as can the religious instruction. But just here we meet the question: Granted that it can, does it actually do so? And to this many of those who ought to know answer in the negative. Not a few go so far as to say that the religious instruction harms rather than helps in just this process of character-formation and establishment of life-principles. So strong is the condemnation of the religious instruction as it exists that we are driven to seek for serious defects to explain the alleged undesirable results.¹⁸ To a discussion of these defects let us now pass.

The religious teaching as a whole is dogmatic, traditional, and uncritical, and thus in contrast with all other branches of school study. Luther's appeal to the Bible—his substitution of infallible book for infallible church—is the charter of the religious teaching. And although the Bible is the only declared source of authority, yet in practice the mantle of inspiration is stretched to cover catechism, and even hymns. No commoner question is heard than: "What does the Scripture say?" "What text can you give?" And hardly less frequent is: "Give a sentence from the catechism for this point." The whole general impression of actual class work is marked by this dogmatic and authoritative tone. The tales of the Old Testament, no matter how strongly discredited by current scholarship, are treated here as literally true records of actual events.

This impression is confirmed by the declarations of the authorities, by the form of the accepted schoolbooks, and in other ways.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the results of the religious instruction, see an article by the present writer in *Religious Education*, August, 1906.

In the work on German schools authorized by the government on the occasion of the St. Louis Exposition we read:

Religion, the most important of human affairs, demands, as does no other branch, constant reference to the sources, in this case the Bible. . . . Thus the seminary works, with the single exception of church history, entirely from the sources, the Scriptures. . . . Faith and morals must be built exclusively upon the Holy Scriptures.¹⁹

I have examined dozens of schoolbooks in actual use in Prussian schools, and have failed to find in any one of them a phrase which could be considered as casting any doubt on the most rigid theory of inspiration.

Thus for its subject-matter the religious instruction draws exclusively from the past, if we except a modicum of church knowledge and a few modern hymns. But this backward look is not merely with respect to the matter; it affects the question of methods also. Luther is quoted as the best authority on a point of modern school practice, by Falk, writing in 1873:

On the question, what parts of the catechism are essential for the instruction of the youth, no one can be better qualified to answer than Luther himself. . . . [Luther says] "the ordinary Christian, *who cannot read the Scriptures*, must be taught"²⁰

Thus Luther's judgment, though for such manifestly mediaeval conditions, is asserted to be the best authority for the present day. In another place appeal is made to the recommendations of school ordinances of 1528 and 1542, to determine the best practice for the religious instruction of the present.

The appeal, then, in the religious teaching is not to facts and the external truth of things, as in other studies, but to the record, chiefly and avowedly the Bible, and also, at least implicitly, to the catechism. This procedure is aided, or rather made possible, by the fact that in the vast majority of Prussian schools the pupils *ask no questions*; otherwise, we can hardly doubt that, in the older classes at least, wonder and doubt, and even out-and-out disbelief, would come to utterance. The question naturally arises: What about the teachers? Do they accept the traditions and teach them in full

¹⁹ Lexis, *Das Unterrichtswesen im Deutschen Reich* (Berlin, 1904), Vol. III, pp. 277 ff.

²⁰ The italics are ours.

faith? Far from it: the teachers of the higher schools are *Gebildete*, and as such in the large majority extremely liberal; many of them hold the Old Testament stories, or even the whole miraculous content of the Bible, as mythical. The teachers in the *Volksschulen* are rapidly moving in the same direction. Doubtless there are exceptions to this, even among the higher teachers, and more among the teachers in the common schools; but the rule and the tendency are generally admitted to be as above stated. The uniform orthodoxy of the teaching is simply the result of strict regulation and supervision; the authorities of church and state require such teaching, and the teacher is compelled to perform it.

We may add the testimony of a distinguished professor of theology, who has taken a prominent part in the discussion of the question—Baumgarten, of Kiel. He says:

The most extreme stress of conscience is endured by our best and most progressive teachers . . . it often happens that teachers who for themselves have renounced belief, not merely in a personal devil, but even in a personal God, must with all energy expound such phrases as "the power of the devil." Thus arises that cold-blooded, purely objective, desolating religious instruction which must be a bitter load even to the teacher himself. Similar is the case of the teaching of the miracles by teachers who are completely imbued with belief in the inviolability of natural law.²¹

In another place Baumgarten declares that the present situation violates the truth of scientific results, of the conscience of the person, whether teacher or pupil, and of the sense of reality.

In the home often, and, failing that, in the world at large, the ideas and sanctions of the school instruction in religion will be ruthlessly criticized and attacked. The household of the average social democrat or of the typical *Gebildeter* is likely to give but a chill reception at best to miracle and Bible myth when they are set forth as facts, or to the Apostle's Creed on any terms. No doubt in many cases the considerate parent may forbear, at least for the time, to controvert what he at heart disbelieves, in order to avoid confusion in the mind of his child. But even this is a questionable and only temporary procedure; it would be hard to prove any obligation on the father's part thus to abdicate his own duty of moral and religious

²¹*Neue Bahnen* (Tübingen), p. 19.

preception and allow his child to be trained in conceptions which he himself rejects.

And, supposing that the conflict between tradition and new thought is averted in the home, either as just suggested or because the home does still agree with the church and school, yet the time must soon come for testing; the world is no longer orthodox nor pious in the evangelical sense. No written word is its test of truth, and the Apostle's Creed is for the mass of men no longer in any sense an expression of actual personal belief.

Not only is the standard of truth held by the religious instruction opposed to the best thought of the times, but the type of spiritual experience which it embodies is impossible to the great majority of both teachers and pupils. We have seen that teacher and pupil are compelled to say they know and think things which they really doubt or reject; we shall see that they are also compelled to declare that they *feel* what they do not feel, and often have never felt.

The Bible, and to a somewhat less degree the catechism, come to us from a time in which the supernatural and the mystical formed an essential and fully accepted part of all religious experience; when a personal God and a personal devil, and angels and demons of all ranks, were as real as any visible thing. Moreover, both the biblical writings and the catechism, hymns, and prayers which are found in the religious lessons, embody the thoughts and experiences not of the average man but of the unusual or even extraordinary religious souls. It is clear that much will be found in this body of religious literature which the normal modern man cannot expect to find exemplified in his own experience. In part it has passed away with the age which produced it, and in part it is simply beyond his spiritual range. How foreign it must be to the inner life of the average child in school!

So varied and numerous are the forms of this evil that it is hard to select illustration or make any classification. The catechism is undoubtedly the chief source of offense; in it the imposition of a foreign experience is in its most extreme form—the confessions and declarations are all in the first person: the child constantly says, "I believe," "we ought," "I am in duty bound," "Christ hath redeemed me," and the like. How many teachers of religion in the schools have

experiences to correspond with the creed, and especially with Luther's "interpretation" of the second and third articles? As to the children, it is perhaps fortunate that they repeat words without thought, in such phrases as "me, a lost and damned creature," or, "on the last day, He will raise me up, with all the dead," and other like passages in the catechism. Men who lived in the midst of such tragedies as the Peasants' War, and such travesties of religion as the papacy of Luther's time, might well pray to be "taken out of this vale of tears to Christ in heaven;" nor does modern life, alas, always escape agony and despair; but to force even the verbal expression of such sad experience upon happy and normal children is unjustifiable and perilous.

Many of the hymns learned by heart, and recited and explained without end, are strongly pietistic, and bring the personal religious experience to the strongest expression. Here again there is no lack of material entirely suitable for school use; this needs no proof to anyone who has even a slight acquaintance with the German hymnology. But nearly all, even of the best hymns, need to be edited by omission at least, and many that are actually used are unfit. How many children, or even teachers, can feel in harmony with Gerhardt's outburst: "Where art thou, O sun? The night hath banished thee! It matters not; another sun, my Jesus, my joy, shines full brightly in my heart"? And in the eighth verse of the same hymn ("Nun ruhen alle Wälder") the intensity and unrestraint of the emotion rise to such a pitch that translation would become caricature:

Breit' aus die Flügel beide,
O Jesu, meine Freude,
Und nimm dein Kühlein ein.
Will Satan mich verschlingen,
So lass die Engel singen:
Dies Kind soll unverletzt sein.

And this verse must be explained by *teacher and pupil*, memorized, and many times recited; and all as a part of an ideal religious experience. Paul Gerhardt's hymns are generally permeated with this intense personal tone, and they are the favorites for school use.

The chief elements of this foreign experience may be summed

up under four heads: *conscious personal love of God and Jesus and communion with them; faith in divine aid and guidance in one's own life; consciousness of sin; and longing for heaven.* The religious instruction in all its branches abounds with these ideas, expressed, not as general possibilities of human experience, which would be comparatively innocent, but embodied in declarations of personal testimony—not as objectively conceived, but as felt and known in the soul of the speaker. And these intimate personal expressions are forced upon the lips of those to whom the corresponding inner events are unknown, and in many cases actually impossible. The last two of these types of experience are the most foreign to the child, and deserve special attention.

Jesus made childhood the type of the kingdom of heaven; the Lutheran catechism in the Evangelical school makes the child call himself “a lost and damned creature,” needing to be redeemed by blood and suffering, from sin, death, and that favorite concept of the catechism, the power of the devil. The gentle and beloved Gerhardt drives home the sense of guilt and debt in his grand version of Bernard’s hymn, “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden;” the agony and shame of the cross “is all my burden, the desert of my guilt, borne by the innocent Jesus.”

We need not fall into the absurdity of declaring that the child is sin-free, “pure as an angel in heaven”—a doctrine which has not entirely lacked advocates. Every normal child, at least, commits faults not a few, and should upon occasion be made aware of them, and that with all needful force; and this can be effected without doing violence to his nature, and on the basis of ideas and feelings really his own. But to say, and to make him say, that he is essentially and exclusively a sinner, blackening the name still more by joining with it words which to the child are profane echoes of the street—this is a totally different and quite unjustifiable procedure. As Baumgarten indignantly writes:

The pupils are defenseless, the prey of the instructor. . . . The lessons put answers into the mouths of the children which do not come from their own sense and understanding. . . . By skilful interrogation consciousness of sin, despair on account of sin, are catechized into the child-mind and out again.

“Love not the world nor the things of the world. If anyone

love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." What can this mean to a twelve-year-old boy, full of life and spirits, rejoicing in every breath he draws, just as God meant him to, as we must believe? And why should the clear and valid cry of the prayer, "Deliver us from evil," require a declaration that this world is a vale of tears? The child who could really feel in his heart what he repeats with his lips, "If I have Thee, I will not desire heaven or earth," would have little hope of fulfilling his true destiny either here or hereafter.

Here again Paul Gerhardt, with all his charm and sweetness, is one of the chief offenders—or at least is made so by the use of his hymns indiscriminately for all ages. One of his best-known hymns, often heard in the school, "Wie soll ich dich empfangen?" contains all the forms of unchildlike religious sentiment; sin, contrition, world-weariness, longing for heaven; and ends with a passionate cry: "Come, ah come, O Sun of Righteousness, and take us, one and all, to the eternal light and rapture of thy mansion of joy!"

It would be easy to multiply illustrations of this element in the religious instruction; but hardly necessary, since it is simply the reflection of a powerful current familiar to all who study either present or past Christianity—a current coming more from Paul, asceticism, and pietism than from the Founder of Christianity. That no child and comparatively few adults in this age can sympathize with this expression, in any such extreme form, hardly needs to be stated.

What is the ground of the defects which we have pointed out in the religious instruction? The one central cause is the fact that the form and substance of the instruction have been determined by the church, with only the slightest influence of the school as such. This fact is writ large in the history of the German school, higher as well as lower, though more prominent in the *Volksschule*. It is constantly referred to in current educational discussion.

The Evangelical church in Germany, perhaps neither more nor less than churches in general, is bending its chief energies upon the defense and nurture of the faith which it holds to have been delivered to the Fathers; and its most effective and available organ for this task is the school. Hence the stress upon catechism, hymns, the Bible, as the norm of morals and religion, and upon church history;

hence the bitter opposition to the non-confessional school advocated by so many educational leaders; hence the tenacious hold upon the clerical inspection of schools, which the trend of affairs is slowly but inevitably abolishing; hence, too, the jealous insistence upon orthodoxy in the religious views of teachers who impart the religious lessons. The main elements of this clerical control are these: First the whole educational system, from primary school to university, including the normal schools in which all teachers must be trained (for the *Volksschulen*), is under the control of a ministry which also administers ecclesiastical affairs. We may be sure, then, that there is no lack of clerical representation in the supreme educational authority. Secondly, a very large portion of the inspection is still in the hands of the clergy. For example, out of 1,243 circuit inspectors, 873 are pastors in office; and no doubt many of the others have had more or less theological training, and some have taken orders, but are not in actual incumbency. Then the religious instruction is in all cases open to the inspection of the local clergyman at his pleasure; he may report to the higher boards any criticism he sees fit to make on the teaching. Thirdly, all textbooks for religious instruction must be approved by an ecclesiastical board even before being submitted to the ministry. It is easy to see how this affects not merely the introduction of textbooks, but also their very production: the writers of religious textbooks cannot be oblivious to the churchly censorship to which the future book must be submitted before it can even enter on its mission in the actual work of the school. Fourthly, the seminaries in which the *Volksschule* teachers are trained are strongly churchly in their whole tone and tendency. Reukauf says: "Most of the seminary directors are essentially theologians." The future teacher lives in the seminary as a home for three years, and is subject to far deeper impression than any mere instruction could produce.

These elements are merely some of the more important external and official holds of the church; the vital fact is that the church is so great a power with the government as a whole through political circumstances. The phrase "throne and altar" is frequently heard as indicating the spirit and aim of the present government. How much influence in the school and the religious instruction is to be

assigned to political considerations would be hard to estimate, and lies beyond the limits of our discussion; but there is good reason to suspect that not a little zeal ostensibly for Christ and the church might, if thoroughly analyzed, turn out to be devotion to the existing political order. Many would be inclined to echo the proverb of the mediaeval peasants: "The pastor bridles us for the nobleman to ride."

The teachers and lay authorities in the schools in general view this condition with strong disapproval, and, at least outside of Prussia, outspoken complaint. Thrändorf says: "The clergy are bent upon developing fanatical devotion to confessional dogmas, rather than genuine moral character." Lietz complains of "antiquated and unscientific dogma, through which wider and wider circles of the people are being estranged from religion." Reukauf declares that "the school must be emancipated from the oppression of the church and the bureaucracy." Dörpfeld complains that the church compels the school to do the menial work, as it were, the mere memorizing, for the later confirmation instruction. These are manifestations of a deep and far-reaching feeling among the teachers.

The foregoing description and estimates are the fruit of thorough personal observation of the religious instruction and of extensive study of the literature relating to it. If we should add one word to express the chief impression resulting from the whole study and the reflection upon it, it would be this: The ground of most of the failures and defects of the German religious instruction is the effort to make it bolster up a formal creed and an ecclesiastical establishment which are no longer in accord with the best thought and work of the time. And we believe, with Professor Rein, that any such attempt is foredoomed to failure, and bids fair to carry down with it the whole body of the religious instruction. We believe there are abundant lessons in the German situation for us in America, both those of us who are entirely satisfied with our present condition and those who deplore the absence of religious teaching from the school.